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CLAIMS

1.   A method for co-ordinating a group of members, the group comprising a first member and one or more other members, each member being arranged to communicate with the other members of the group via a network, the method comprising, at the first one of said group members, the steps of:

monitoring at least one waiting channel for messages indicating that at least one of the one or more other members are joined to the waiting channel; and

when the messages indicate that all of the other members have left the waiting channel, performing an action or process.

2.   A method according to claim 1, wherein the action or process to be performed comprises transmitting data onto one or more other channels.

3.   A method according to claim 2, wherein at least one of the one or more other channels is a multicast channel.

4.   A method according to claims 2 or 3, wherein the data is audio and/or video data.

5.   A method according to claim 1, wherein the action or process is to perform a predetermined task.

6.   A method according to any of the preceding claims, wherein in the case of there being a plurality of other members the waiting channel is a multicast channel.

7.   A method according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the messages are generated by a network router.

8.   A method according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the messages are Multicast Source Notification of Interest Protocol (MSNIP) messages.

9.   A method according to any of the preceding claims, and further comprising the steps of announcing which channel is the waiting channel to the one or more other members.

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10.   A method for co-ordinating a group of members, the group comprising a first member and one or more other members, each member being arranged to communicate with the other members of the group via a network, the method comprising, at one or more of said other members, the steps of:

5   joining at least one waiting channel relating to an action or process to be performed by the first member;

            performing an action or process at the one or more of said other members; and then

            leaving the waiting channel.

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11.   A method according to claim 10, wherein the action or process to be performed comprises preparing to receive data on one or more other channels.

12.   A method according to claim 11, wherein at least one of the one or more other

15   channels is a multicast channel.

13.   A method according to claims 10 or 11, wherein the data is audio and/or video data.

20 14.   A method according to claim 10, wherein the action or process is to perform a predetermined task.

15.   A method according to any of claims 10 to 14, wherein in the case of there being a plurality of other members the waiting channel is a multicast channel.

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16.   A method according to any of claims 10 to 15, and further comprising the steps of receiving an announcement indicating which channel is the waiting channel from the first member.

30 17.   A computer program or suite of programs so arranged such that when executed by a computer system the program or programs cause the computer system to operate according to the method of any one of the preceding claims.

18.   A computer-readable storage medium or media storing a computer program or

35   suite of programs as claimed in claim 17.

19.   A device arranged to co-ordinate with one or more other devices, each device being arranged to communicate via a network, the device comprising:

     channel monitoring means arranged in use to monitor at least one waiting channel for messages indicating that at least one of the one or more others of said devices are joined to the waiting channel; and

     means for performing an action or process so arranged such that when the messages indicate that all of the other devices have left the waiting channel the means performs said action or process.

20.   A device according to claim 19, wherein the means for performing an action or process comprise data transmission means arranged in use to transmit data onto one or more other channels.

21.   A device according to claim 20, wherein at least one of the one or more other channels is a multicast channel.

22.   A device according to claims 20 or 21, wherein the data is audio and/or video data.

23.   A device according to claim 19, wherein the means for performing an action or process are further arranged in use to perform a predetermined task.

24.   A device according to any of claims 19 to 23, wherein in the case of there being a plurality of other devices the waiting channel is a multicast channel.

25.   A device according to any of claims 19 to 24, wherein the messages are generated by a network router.

26.   A device according to any of the claims 19 to 25, wherein the messages are Multicast Source Notification of Interest Protocol (MSNIP) messages.

27.   A device arranged to co-ordinate with another device, each device being arranged to communicate via a network, the device comprising:

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channel joining means arranged in use to join at least one waiting channel relating to an action or process to be performed by the first device;

means for performing an action or process; and

channel leaving means arranged in use to leave the waiting channel.

28.   A device according to claim 27, wherein the means for performing an action or process comprise data receiving means arranged in use to receive data from one or more other channels.

29.   A device according to claim 28, wherein at least one of the one or more other channels is a multicast channel.

30.   A device according to claims 28 or 29, wherein the data is audio and/or video data.

31.   A device according to claim 27, wherein the means for performing an action or process are further arranged in use to perform a predetermined task.

32.   A device according to any of claims 27 to 31, wherein the waiting channel is a multicast channel.

33.   A device according to any of claims 27 to 32, and further comprising announcement receiving means arranged in use to receive an announcement indicating which channel is the waiting channel from the other device.

34.   A network channel when used as a waiting channel, wherein members of a group other than a first member join the waiting channel whilst performing an action or process, and then leave the waiting channel once the action or process has been performed, wherein the first member of the group then performs an action or process.

35.   A method of group co-ordination using a network, wherein members of a group other than a first member join at least one network channel designated as a waiting channel whilst performing an action or process, and then leave the waiting channel once the action or process has been performed, wherein the first member of the group then performs an action or process.

36.   A method according to claims 34 or 35, wherein messages are sent to the first member on the waiting channel indicating whether or not any of the other members are joined to the waiting channel.

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